

TITLE	SDL Community Facility, North Wokingham Matthewsgreen
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 22 February 2018
WARD	Emmbrook and Norreys
DIRECTOR	Interim Director of Environment - Josie Wragg
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning- David Lee

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Increased community facilities within North Wokingham, in line with the Shaping Our New Communities strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Executive resolve to:

- 1) agree in principal that the provider for the Matthewsgreen Community Centre will be Kings Church Wokingham subject to the Director of Locality & Customer Services and Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning receiving a satisfactory form of agreement for suitable governance arrangements with WBC to enable provision of services which are consistent with 'Shaping Our New Communities' principles; and
- 2) agree that subject to 1) being satisfactorily concluded, a final agreement with Kings Church Wokingham will be written and reported back to the Executive for final agreement.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The new neighbourhood centre within the North Wokingham SDL will have a joint primary school / community centre. The reserved matters planning application for the building is currently being considered by the Planning Committee and a decision is expected by February 2018.

In line with a recommendation for partnership management for the new SDL community centres in the Shaping Our New Communities strategy, the Council invited expressions of interest to manage the new Matthewsgreen community centre, following engagement with the local community and interested stakeholders. Kings Church Wokingham (KCW) was the only formal expression of interest received.

The KCW proposal includes an investment of up to £1million, which would provide an addition to the building to house a coffee shop and additional office space. KCW is requesting exclusive use of the facility on Sundays. The facility would serve the local community Mondays to Saturdays, with preference given to local people and organisations. This approach already happens in other parts of the borough.

If the Council selects KCW to be the provider for the community centre, they will need to apply for separate planning permission for the proposed addition.

Background

Matthewsgreen Neighbourhood Centre is within the North Wokingham SDL and is the location of the main community infrastructure delivery site, which was shown in the North Wokingham Strategic Development Location Supplementary Planning Document:

One neighbourhood centre at Matthewsgreen designed to act as a community hub for new and existing residential areas, providing local retail, community, recreation and education facilities for the residents of the SDL to enable them to access local facilities without the need to travel.

In April 2015, the council approved the outline planning application for the Matthewsgreen development (application reference number O/2014/2242) which includes a community centre in the neighbourhood centre as part of the school site.

The reserved matters planning application for the community, primary and nursery school building with associated access, parking and landscaping including playing fields and hard court play areas is currently under consideration. It is anticipated that if the planning application is approved, the Council will begin the construction tendering process shortly thereafter. Due to the Council's construction schedule, any proposed changes to the building will need to be agreed by April 2018.

Analysis of Issues

The Shaping Our New Communities strategy (SONC), which had a public consultation in 2014, recommends the new SDL community centres explore a management model that is independent of the Council. To date, there are two new SDL community centres that are in the detailed planning phase. The new community centre for the South of the M4 SDL will be managed by Shinfield Parish Council and the Montague Park community centre will be managed by Christ Church Wokingham.

The purpose of this report is to consider the management of the Matthewsgreen community centre. In autumn 2017, Kings Church Wokingham (KCW) contacted the Council expressing an interest in operating the community centre and in November submitted a formal expression of interest (attached).

Search for Providers

The Council engaged with the local community and interested stakeholders regarding looking for a provider to manage the community centre. The North Wokingham Community Forum received detailed presentations on the joint primary school / community facility for Matthewsgreen in July and November 2016. Both Forum meetings were very well attended by the local community, with between 150 and 200 attendees at each meeting. At both meetings, the community centre was discussed and expressions of interest were invited for any organisations interested in running the community centre. Wokingham Town Council was asked if they were interested. They declined as their current focus is on the town centre regeneration.

St Paul's Church Wokingham approached the Council regarding the community centre, but after discussions with KCW, decided not to submit an expression of interest.

If the KCW proposal is not progressed, the Council could issue a further request for expressions of interest.

King's Church Wokingham Proposal

KCW has done extensive research into other community centres in the borough to ensure their vision for the community centre is financially sound, that the management structure will work, and that what they would offer would be consistent with what the community wants.

KCW's proposal includes an addition to the building, which they would pay for, to add a coffee shop and some additional office space to the community centre. The addition would require separate planning permission.

The outline planning permission requires the community centre to be approximately 600m² to serve the 1500 new homes in the development. KCW's proposed addition would increase the floor area of the community centre by 184m².

The community centre is comprised of a main hall, a multi-purpose room, toilets and changing rooms, a kitchenette and an outdoor play area. KCW are proposing to add a coffee shop and some additional office space in the area currently designated for outdoor play.

The proposed additional floorspace would need to be considered through the planning application process, including the need for additional parking spaces.

Community Use

The church is requesting exclusive use of the facility on Sundays. Monday to Saturday the facility would serve the community, with preference given to local organisations over commercial or non-local bookings. The ongoing maintenance and management of the facility would be by the church.

Lease

As KCW will be investing in the building by adding a coffee shop and additional office space, they are requesting a 30 year lease at a peppercorn rent. The lease agreement will be subject to the project receiving planning approval.

Heads of Terms

The heads of terms to include:

1. A period of 30 years for the lease of community centre;
2. That ownership of the land and the building (including the addition that will be paid for by the church) will be by Wokingham Borough Council;
3. Premises will be let to the church on full repairing leases. Responsibility for insurance will remain with WBC and the cost of the premium recharged to the church.
4. Rates and taxes will be the responsibility of the church.
5. All aspects of cleaning will be the responsibility of the church, including litter / waste bins / waste management.

6. KCW will have exclusive use of the facility on Sundays but it will be open to the community Mondays to Saturdays, with preferential booking to local community groups;
7. Use of the community centre – use of the community centre will be open to all individuals and groups/organisations. To ensure accessibility for all, branding must indicate that it is a community centre and not just a church;
8. Wokingham Borough Council will not seek profit sharing during the period of the 30 year lease;
9. KCW will submit annual reports to the Council providing details of the community use and benefits of the centre. The Council will review the community use of the centre every five years via a governance advisory group; and
10. If the Council has evidence of the use of the community centre that is not consistent with the principles in the Shaping Our New Community strategy, the Council has the right to break the lease and will not be liable for any repayment of KCW's investment. If KCW wants to terminate the lease early, they will not be repaid for their investment.

Timeline

The Council's planning application for the joint primary school / community centre is currently under consideration by the Planning Committee. It was deferred at the December 2017 meeting to allow further consideration of the play provision for the school. It is anticipated the application will go to the February 2018 Committee meeting.

If the Council selects KCW to be the provider for the community centre, they will need to apply for planning permission for their proposed addition. Due to the Council's construction schedule, any proposed changes to the building need to be approved by April. This tight timeline means that any delay in selecting KCW as the provider could affect the viability of the partnership.

The Council's Corporate Strategy/Vision

The proposal is consistent with the Council's corporate strategy and vision. A new community centre in the North Wokingham SDL will make Wokingham Borough a more attractive place to live, work and do business.

Revenue and capital budgets over the next 3 years

KCW are proposing to invest up to £1m in the community centre, which will add a cafe and additional meeting rooms to the facilities available to the community. KCW estimates the cost of the addition to be approximately £600K, with the remaining funds going to fitting out the community centre.

The cost of building the joint primary school / community centre is funded primarily through developers' contributions and is budgeted for in the capital programme.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	None		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	None		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	None		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
None

List of Background Papers
King's Church Wokingham Expression of Interest Shaping Our New Communities strategy

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